

Historical Sketch
OF
RUTLAND RAILROAD
COMPANY

1849 - 1949

Issued on this Centennial Date
DECEMBER 18, 1949

DECEMBER 18, 1949 is an important date on the calendar of the Rutland Railroad for it marks the Centennial Anniversary of the running of the first train over the completed line of the Rutland and Burlington Railroad Company from Burlington, on Lake Champlain, to Bellows Falls, on the Connecticut River, where connection was made with the Cheshire Railroad running south to Brattleboro and the Sullivan County Railroad running north from Bellows Falls to Windsor.

The Champlain and Connecticut River Railroad Company had received its charter from the Legislature of the State of Vermont on November 1, 1843 (The anniversary of this date was fitly observed by us six years ago.) and proceeded during the following year to make contracts for beginning construction work. It was not, however, until 1847 that the contracts were signed for making the final construction work which would unite the portions already finished and in this same year the name of the corporation was changed to Rutland and Burlington Railroad Company, on November 6th.

The work was completed thirteen days prior to the expiration date specified in the contracts and on December 18, 1849 the first trains were operated.

"The ceremony of celebrating this auspicious event was a momentous occasion. Trains from Burlington and from Boston met at the rock excavation near the top of Mount Holly, where the last spike was driven.

Salt water from Boston Harbor was mingled with fresh water from Lake

Champlain, and thus the new road was christened."

From the pages of an old history, we read:

"The line of the Rutland Railroad in Vermont from the Connecticut Valley, over the Green Mountains, to the valley of the Otter and thence on to the Champlain region is older than any historical record. First an Indian trail, then a bridle path for white settlers, then a military road, then a turnpike and stage route and it finally becomes the course of a great railway forming an important link between the traffic systems of New England and the West.

Whether as a warpath of savages or guide to the pioneer, or as a channel of commerce, the history of this natural highway is of absorbing interest."

Iron procured from deposits at Pittsford, Vt. and Brandon, Vt. on our line was used in making the cast iron rail seats and the first cars to be used were manufactured at Brandon—the initial rolling stock consisting of 190 freight cars, 40 gravel cars, 4 baggage cars and 4 passenger cars. There were also built by the Taunton Locomotive Mfg. Co. of Taunton, Mass. 8 engines of 18 tons each for passenger service and 4 engines of 20 tons each for freight service.

At the 1847 session of the Vermont Legislature an amendment to the original charter was obtained permitting the building of a branch line of track from the main line just north of Vergennes to the navigable waters of Otter Creek below the falls west of Vergennes, in order better to handle traffic moving on Lake Champlain.

In 1850 an engine house, to accommodate 16 locomotives, and a machine shop were built at Rutland to take the place of temporary structures in use for the past two years and a passenger station and engine house and repair shop were placed under construction at Burlington.

The excavation in connection with the general construction involved the removal of approximately 6,000,000 cubic yards of earth and gravel, 325,000 yards of solid rock and 25,000 yards of loose rock which, together with the necessary masonry, required in the culverts, bridges and supporting walls, aggregating approximately 80,000 yards, presented a formidable task with the facilities then available.

The entire line of track, 125 miles in length, was laid in six and one-half months by one contractor.

It is of more than passing interest to note that when the contractors began to clear the rocks near Summit, where the elevation is 1,511 feet, preparatory to blasting, they were obliged to clean out a small pond or pot-hole near where the station now stands. The draining of this pond disclosed a bed of mud and silt. When clearing away this mud, the skeleton of a mastodon was uncovered which attracted the attention of many scientists and led to the placing of this skeleton in a Boston museum.

On December 19, 1849, the day following the movement of the first trains over the completed line, the following notice was issued by the Assistant Superintendent:

"RUTLAND AND BURLINGTON RAILROAD

Through to Bellows Falls

Change of Hours!

"On and after Monday, December 24, 1849, Trains will leave Burlington for Boston at 6½ A.M. Sundays excepted, stop an hour at Bellows Falls for dinner, arriving at Boston 5.55 P.M. fare \$6.00; connecting at Walpole with the stage for Brattleboro and thence to New York, also at Groton Junction with Worcester and Nashua, Norwich and Worcester Railroad and Steamers on Long Island Sound, arriving at New York, 5 A.M. next morning, fare \$8.80.

Returning, leave Boston 7½ A.M. arriving Burlington 6½ P.M. leave New York 4 P.M. arriving at Burlington the next evening in the first train from Boston, connecting at Bellows Falls, both ways, with Sullivan Railroad, to White River Junction and Wells River. Also accommodation train will leave Rutland at 7:30 A.M. for Burlington, returning at 1:30 P.M. arriving at Rutland 5 P.M.

All further information, together with tickets, can be obtained at the Ticket office in Burlington, and at the Station Agents on the line.

L. Bigelow,

Ass't. Superintendent.

Dec. 19, 1849"

Records indicate that in 1852 the first train in the United States ever to be moved under orders received by telegraph was operated over the Rutland and Burlington Railroad between Rutland and Burlington.

In 1851—two years after opening the road—the Rolling Stock consisted of the following items:

“20	Engines
2	72-seat passenger cars
12	60-seat passenger cars
2	Mail cars
4	Accommodation cars
221	8-wheel box cars
42	8-wheel cattle cars
2	8-wheel Saloon Cars
3	Way Freight cars
76	8-wheel platform cars
66	Gravel cars
16	Hand cars
20	4-wheel box cars
all in good condition and repair.”	

It is said that the first refrigerator car actually built and put into service on any American Railroad was placed in operation on the Northern Railroad (later the Ogdensburg and Lake Champlain Railroad and now a part of the Rutland Railroad) in the summer of 1851, within less than a year after this road was placed in operation.

Typical of the excitement caused by the advent of the railroad, the following item appeared in an issue of the Bellows Falls, Vt. Times of January 14, 1850—a few weeks after the movement of the first train:

“The engine came up in grand style and when opposite our village the Monster gave one of its most savage yells, frightening men, women and children considerably and bringing forth deafening howls from all the dogs in the neighborhood.”

The early locomotives were given the names of our principal stations and this

practice of naming engines continued for several years. Our first engine, purchased June 11, 1849, was named the "Rutland" and three more purchased later in the same month were named "Middlebury," "Burlington" and "Bellows Falls" respectively. Four more purchased during the same year bore the following names: "Vergennes," "Cuttingsville," "Rockingham" and "Mt. Holly." These were followed by six engines purchased in 1850, which were named for the following stations: "Brandon," "Chester," "Pittsford," "Charlotte," "Whiting" and "Ludlow." In 1851 the following three were added to the locomotive roster: "Clarendon," "Cavendish" and "New Haven."

The annual report for the year ending May 31, 1852—the first full year of operation where no charges pertaining to construction were included—showed total revenues of \$324,790.63, with total expenditures of \$159,450.91, or net gain of \$165,339.72. The following year was much better, with total revenues of \$495,397.45 and total expenses of \$228,858.33, or net earnings of \$266,539.12.

On November 19, 1853 the property passed to Mortgage Trustees who operated the railroad until June 23, 1867, when the Company was incorporated as the Rutland Railroad Company and reorganized effective July 9, 1867 under the laws of the State of Vermont.

In 1862 we were building all of our freight cars in our own shops at Rutland.

On May 12, 1865 lease of the Vermont Valley R. R. between Bellows Falls, Vt.

and Brattleboro, Vt., a distance of 24 miles, was acquired.

The Annual Report for 1869 had this item:

"In October, 1869 Vermont was visited by a powerful rain, producing an unprecedented flood which greatly injured your road, preventing trains running through to Bellows Falls for twenty-two days. The most damage was in the towns of Chester and Rockingham where the road is in the valley of the Williams River. Four bridges were swept away and the abutments of three others undermined.

About 5,600 feet of the road bed was entirely carried away near Bartonville and the new depot at that point was destroyed.

Cost of repairs account

of this freshet	\$119,825.00
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Loss of revenue in

October	50,000.00
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Total	<u>\$169,825.00"</u>
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On December 1, 1870 lease was made with the Vermont and Massachusetts R. R. covering line 21 miles in length. from Brattleboro, Vt. to Grout's Corners, Mass. (Millers Falls), this being the old Brattleboro and Fitchburg R. R.

On December 7, 1870 lease of the Addison Railroad was acquired, this line extending from Leicester Junction, Vt. west 15 miles to Ticonderoga, N. Y. where connection was made with the Whitehall and Plattsburg R. R. As no construction work had been done by the owning company, the entire length of road was built and operated by the Rutland Railroad.

In order to reach Ticonderoga on the west side of Lake Champlain it was necessary to cross the lake on a unique form of bridge span which was in reality a barge, hinged at one end to a pier and which could be floated out of position to permit lake transportation to pass north and south and also adjust itself to the changing water level of the lake.

On January 30, 1871 the Vermont Central Railroad Company and the Vermont and Canada Railroad Company leased our property for a period of twenty years from January 1, 1871, together with the assignment of the leased roads herein mentioned, and on December 31, 1890 this lease was renewed for a term of nine hundred and ninety-nine years from January 1, 1891. The road was operated under the terms of this lease until May 7, 1896 when it was returned to the owning company.

The line of the Whitehall and Plattsburg R. R., extending from Ticonderoga, N. Y. north 17 miles to Port Henry, N. Y., was leased September 26, 1870, this being for the purpose of effecting connection with a projected line of road to run into Canada.

On January 23, 1871 a lease was made with the Montreal and Plattsburg R. R. for their line, running 24 miles north from Plattsburg, N. Y. to the International Boundary north of Rouses Point.

Inasmuch as the anticipated connection with a railroad line to be run into Burlington from the north had not materialized, it was necessary, in order to effect an outlet into Canada, that freight be transported by boat between Burlington and Rouses

Point, N. Y. and in 1853 this tonnage amounted to 22,000 tons.

The Annual Report to Stockholders dated October 4, 1860 contains the following paragraph:

"In this connection it affords us pleasure to be able to state that harmonious and advantageous relations for connection of trains and interchange of traffic have been established with the Vermont & Canada Railroad. Passenger trains are now run without change between Montreal and Troy, and there is an uninterrupted daily freight connection from Montreal and Ogdensburgh on to and over our road, from which we confidently expect to derive increasing advantages. A new and more feasible road to make a more direct connection with our road is now being built north from Burlington, by the Vermont and Canada R. R. Co., and we have every reason to believe will be completed and put in operation within the time specified by their charter."

Later, a boat named the "Oakes Ames" was built by the Burlington Steamboat Company, a railroad owned enterprise incorporated for the purpose of building and operating steamboats to carry the cars and freight of the railroad across Lake Champlain between Burlington, Vt. and Plattsburg, N. Y., where connection was made with the Montreal and Plattsburg R. R. which extended to Rouses Point, N. Y., where it joined the Northern R. R. (later the Ogdensburg & Lake Champlain Ry., now a part of the Rutland) and afforded outlet to Ogdensburg and the

west, the Montreal and Plattsburg road having previously been acquired by a group of Rutland stockholders and leased to the Rutland. This operation was established in 1868 and it carried an average of over 1,000 cars per month across the lake.

On May 7, 1896 the property of the Rutland Railroad was returned by the lessees to the owners, the leases of the Vermont Valley R. R., Vermont and Massachusetts R. R., Whitehall and Plattsburg R. R., Montreal and Plattsburg R. R., having been relinquished in the interim. Lease of the Addison Railroad was retained.

By 1900 the Rutland had built a track (Rutland-Canadian Railroad Company) between Burlington and Rouses Point and had made use of the large islands, South Hero, Grand Isle and North Hero, as stepping stones along the route—this was at that time something novel in the art of railroad building—the road bed between the islands being laid on a series of long fills built up from the bottom of the lake, the longest of which is the so-called “Long Fill” between the mainland north of Burlington and the southern tip of South Hero Island, a distance of 3.26 miles. This fill is protected against the action of wind and water by the application of blocks of marble from the quarries of the Vermont Marble Company. This line of gleaming white marble presents a very pleasing appearance.

At Rouses Point connection was made with service to Montreal and also with the Ogdensburg and Lake Champlain Ry., of which the Rutland had obtained control.

The Ogdensburg and Lake Champlain Railway, through its subsidiary corporation, the Ogdensburg Transit Company, had in operation on the St. Lawrence River, Lake Ontario, Lake Erie and Lake Michigan a fleet of freight carrying wooden steamers—these were eight in number, the "Governor Smith," "James R. Langdon," "A. McVittie," "W. L. Frost," "W. J. Averill," "H. R. James," "W. A. Haskell" and "F. H. Prince," which plied between Ogdensburg and Chicago and opened direct communication with the West.

In 1900 the Bennington and Rutland Railway was purchased—this line operating between Rutland and Bennington, being formerly the Western Vermont R. R., and on June 13, 1901 purchase of the Chatham and Lebanon Valley R. R. was made, this being the old Lebanon Springs R. R. running between Bennington, Vt. and Chatham, N. Y., where connection was made with the Harlem River Division of the New York Central System and gave direct avenue to New York City.

Subsequent to the purchase of the Ogdensburg and Lake Champlain, the Bennington and Rutland and the Chatham and Lebanon Valley Railroads, a new charter was obtained—Oct. 29, 1900—permitting the consolidation of these roads plus the Rutland-Canadian R. R., the completely owned subsidiary corporation which constructed the railroad across the islands of Lake Champlain, between Burlington and Rouses Point, a distance of 40 miles, forming the present Rutland Railroad Company.

Somewhat previously, when the Rutland gained possession of the O & L C, the Ogdensburg Transit Company, formerly the Northern Transportation Company, had become the Rutland Transit Company and three of the wooden boats having been lost—one by fire and two by shipwreck—six steel steamers were added to the fleet, these being the "Ogdensburg" and "Rutland" in 1906, "Bennington" and "Burlington" in 1908, "Brandon" and "Arlington" in 1910.

In 1916 due to ruling of the Interstate Commerce Commission under the so-called Panama Canal Act, the Rutland Transit Company was obliged to cease its transportation operations and to sell its steamers. The Company still owns docks and warehouses in Ogdensburg and Chicago.

From time to time the New York Central had bought substantial amounts of Rutland Railroad Stock and in January, 1901 acquired control. January 18, 1905 Mr. W. H. Newman, its President, was also elected President of the Rutland Railroad and for seven years the Rutland was one of the N. Y. C. Lines although operated independently. At this time the New York, New Haven and Hartford R. R. was expanding and later desired to obtain the Rutland in order to effect western connections.

The stock purchased by the New York Central was held until February, 1911 when a one-half interest was sold to the New Haven. Subsequently the New Haven made application for permission to purchase the remaining portion of Rutland

stock held by the Central but litigation prevented this action and the holdings of Rutland stock in the hands of the New Haven were gradually relinquished.

In 1941 the New York Central effected disposal of the balance of the shares which it was carrying.

The Northern Railroad Company was incorporated under the laws of the State of New York on August 5, 1847, for the purpose of building and operating a line of railroad extending from Ogdensburg, N. Y. on the St. Lawrence River to Rouses Point, N. Y. on Lake Champlain, a distance of 117 miles, and construction was commenced and road opened October 1, 1850.

On January 6, 1858 this road was reorganized as the Ogdensburg Railroad.

At the Rouses Point terminus a large building was erected on the lake shore to serve as a passenger station and a hotel where travelers might obtain meals and rooms.

The Western Vermont Railroad was incorporated November 5, 1845 under the Vermont State Laws and was successful in building its railroad from Rutland south to the Vermont-New York State line south of North Bennington (54.5 miles) where it made connection with the Troy and Bennington R. R., this part being completed in July, 1852, the branch between North Bennington and Bennington (4.5 miles) being opened in 1854, and operated it until August 1, 1865 when a reorganization changed the name to Bennington and Rutland Railroad, later—on August 8,

1877—changed to Bennington and Rutland Railway.

The Troy and Boston Railroad had operated this line under lease, as a part of its line, since May 23, 1853. When the lease had expired after 9 years duration, the T & B was asked to leave some of its equipment on the line as the Western Vermont did not have sufficient engines and cars to operate its road, with which request it complied, only to find a short time later that 7 locomotives, 10 passenger coaches and 65 freight cars had been seized under attachment for alleged lack of maintenance of road.

The Lebanon Springs Railroad Company (forerunner of the Chatham and Lebanon Valley R. R.) was incorporated under the laws of the State of New York April 2, 1850 for the purpose of building a railroad from Chatham, N. Y. to the New York-Vermont State Line—51 miles—and thereat to connect with a line of road extending from Bennington, Vt. to the Vermont-New York State line (6 miles), incorporated as the Vermont and New York Railroad, and the road was opened in 1869.

The Lebanon Springs R. R. and the Vermont and New York R. R. were consolidated under terms of an agreement dated August 20, 1867.

The road was operated under the direction of several owners until September 23, 1899 when it was reorganized as the Chatham and Lebanon Valley Railroad Company, continuing under this operation until March 1, 1900 when it was leased by the Rutland Railroad Company and on June

13, 1901 purchased by them, consolidation being effected December 21, 1901.

Due to the discontinuance of passenger service between Chatham and Bennington, the Rutland Transportation Corporation was incorporated under the laws of Vermont and New York September 25, 1925 for the purpose of establishing and maintaining the operation of a bus line between the points mentioned. This operation ceased December 12, 1931 and the buses were sold.

Effective November 3, 1901 arrangements were made under which passenger trains of the Rutland Railroad could run through to Montreal over the Quebec Southern Ry. from Noyan Junction, P. Q. to Quebec Southern Jct. and thence to Montreal via Canadian Pacific Railway.

This same year a trackage agreement was made with the Boston and Maine R. R. Co. and the New York Central and Hudson River R. R. Co. by which Rutland Railroad passenger trains could run through to Troy.

Effective October 1, 1917 the arrangement with the Canadian Pacific Ry. was cancelled and an agreement made with the Grand Trunk Railway System providing for the through movement of Rutland passenger trains to Montreal via Rouses Point, N. Y.

On December 28, 1917 the control of the Rutland Railroad and its leased properties was assumed by the United States Railroad Administration under the jurisdiction of the Director General.

The Railroad continued under this control until March 1, 1920 when the property reverted to the officers of the company.

A torrential rain storm beginning in the night of November 2, 1927 and continuing through the following day and until the morning of November 4th, during which the water in Otter Creek reached a maximum elevation of twenty feet above normal, about four feet higher than any previous record, caused great damage.

There were 356 separate washouts, varying in depth from one foot to seventy feet and aggregating over 17 miles of track and there were also many slides which covered the track with earth and boulders for a total distance of more than one mile.

The cost of restoring the property was approximately \$750,000, with an attendant loss of revenue during the suspension of traffic of \$285,000.

On May 5, 1938 the road passed into Receivership and Mr. G. L. R. French was made Receiver.

Following the resignation of Mr. French on July 9, 1938 Mr. L. G. Morphy was appointed July 10, 1938 and served until May 19, 1941 when Mr. W. E. Navin was appointed, following the resignation of Mr. Morphy.

On September 10, 1943 the Court approved an amended Plan for Reorganization, which had been submitted but decision was withheld pending further action. On June 20, 1944 the Court approved a petition of the Preferred Stockholders and transferred the proceedings to the Bankruptcy Court for reorganization. Mr.

William E. Navin and Mr. Wallace M. Fay were appointed Trustees of the property July 21, 1944. Mr. Fay having resigned, the Court on November 17, 1945 appointed Mr. Albert A. Cree as Trustee.

June 7, 1947 Mr. Cree resigned, and Mr. Oscar O. Edlund was appointed effective July 10, 1947.

Several plans of reorganization having been presented, the Court on July 10, 1948 approved a Plan, which had the approval of the Interstate Commerce Commission, under date of March 16, 1948, and on September 9, 1949 the following Reorganization Managers were appointed:

Mr. Wallace M. Fay, Proctor, Vt.

Mr. Gardner A. Caverly, Ascutney, Vt.

Mr. Irwin K. French, Middlebury, Vt.

and these men have commenced their work.

We have thus come to the date marking the first One Hundred Years of a career of rigorous railroading.

We feel that we have had a small part in our country's era of progress and we look forward with confidence to the opportunity of continuing to function as an integral part of New England's rail transportation system.

APPENDIX

The following men have served as Presidents since the establishment of the Rutland Railroad.

Champlain and Connecticut River R. R.
1843-1847 Timothy Follette

Rutland and Burlington R. R.
1848-1853 Harry Bradley
1854 William R. Lee
1855-1862 Thomas Thacher
1863 Daniel A. Smalley
1864-1867 Albert S. Catlin

Rutland Railroad

1868-1883
John B. Page
1884-1887
Charles Clement
1888-May 1, 1902
Percival W. Clement
May 1, 1902-Jan. 18, 1905
W. Seward Webb
Jan. 18, 1905-Jan. 20, 1909
William H. Newman
Jan. 20, 1909-Jan. 9, 1914
William C. Brown
Jan. 9, 1914-May 31, 1918
Alfred H. Smith
June 11, 1918-July 9, 1918
Howard Elliott
July 9, 1918-May 11, 1920
Edward G. Buckland
May 11, 1920-Mar. 8, 1924
Alfred H. Smith
Apr. 22, 1924-July 9, 1941
Patrick E. Crowley
July 9, 1941-Oct. 29, 1942
William E. Navin
*Oct. 29, 1942-Mar. 10, 1949
John D. Babbage
*May 5, 1949-
John R. Waller

*Presidents of the Corporation. The operation of the property has remained under the jurisdiction of the Court and in charge of the Receiver and Trustees.